

<b>Grievances</b>	Created:	2014
	Last reviewed:	April 2025 – changes noted below
	Approved by:	Governing Body
<b>Policy and Procedure</b>	Author(s)/owner:	HR

## Policy statement

It is the policy of Somerville College to ensure that an individual with a grievance relating to their work, working conditions, or working relationships can use a fair and consistent procedure to raise the matter with the intention of it being addressed and resolved as promptly as possible.

### Written grievance procedure

Nothing in this procedure is intended to prevent you from raising any matter informally that you may wish to mention. Informal discussion can frequently solve problems without the need for a written record. However, if you wish to raise a formal grievance you should normally do so in writing from the outset.

Whilst we will give the same consideration to any grievance that you raise verbally, provided that you make it clear that you wish it to be treated formally, you should be aware that, in most circumstances, the law requires you to provide us with written details of your grievance before taking certain types of legal action.

This procedure details what you should do if you wish to raise a work grievance. It also details the procedure that should be followed to deal with your work grievance.

The Human Resources Manager is able to offer staff and managers further guidance and advice on any matters relating to the grievance procedure.

### Matters covered by this procedure

A grievance can be any problem or concern that an individual has about their work, working environment, working relationships, or actions of fellow employees. It is impossible to provide a comprehensive list of all issues which may be seen as a grievance but common examples include: terms and conditions of employment, health and safety, relationships at work, new working practices, organisational change, and discrimination.

It is important to understand that a grievance can be any work-related matter that an individual perceives to be causing them difficulties or distress at work. If you are unsure about whether a concern you have would constitute a grievance, please seek confidential guidance from the HR Manager.

Collective grievances held by several members of staff are not normally dealt with through the grievance procedure. These should be raised with your senior manager or through seeking advice from the HR Manager, in confidence. They will be able to advise on the most appropriate collective process to address the concerns.

### **Confidentiality**

The principle of confidentiality is vital to the successful operation of the grievance procedure. The obligation for confidentiality lies with the individual raising the grievance, the manager hearing the grievance, the HR Manager, and any other parties involved in offering advice and guidance.

At the beginning of any discussion relating to a grievance all parties involved should agree that the content of their discussion will remain confidential to those present. It should however be acknowledged that in the course of the discussion it may become apparent that in order for the grievance to be resolved other parties may need to be informed of certain information. When such an issue arises all parties concerned should agree about what information may be disclosed to whom, and who should be responsible for relaying the information. Any other party involved as a result must also be made aware of their obligations regarding confidentiality.

### **Statutory right to be accompanied**

All workers, including agency and casual staff and those on part time or temporary contracts, have the right to be accompanied by a fellow worker or trade union official where they are required or invited by their employer to attend certain grievance hearings and when they make a reasonable request to be accompanied. The statutory right applies only to formal grievance hearings, which concern the performance of a 'duty by an employer in relation to a worker'. The College grievance procedure extends this right for workers to be accompanied to all grievance meetings.

The accompanying person may be a single companion who is either a i) fellow worker or ii) a full time official employed by a trade union; or a lay trade union official, so long as they have been reasonably certified in writing by their union as having experience of, or as having received training in, acting as a worker's companion at disciplinary or grievance hearings.

A worker or lay trade union official (employed by the same employer) who has agreed to accompany a colleague to a grievance meeting is entitled to take a reasonable amount of paid time to fulfil this responsibility.

A manager arranging a grievance meeting will endeavour to agree a mutually convenient date for all parties. If the chosen companion cannot attend on the suggested date, the worker can offer an alternative time so long as it is reasonable and falls within five working days from the date first proposed by the employer.

The chosen companion has the right to address the hearing but no statutory right to answer questions on the worker's behalf.

### **Record keeping**

Records will be held on an individual's personal file (this may include manual and computerised records), detailing the nature of the grievance, the employer's response and any subsequent action taken. In certain circumstances information may be withheld from an individual, for example to

protect a witness. We reserve the right to record and/or minute any formal meetings whether conducted by us or a third party, a copy of the recording and/or transcript/minutes can be made available on request. All personal data and records collected and retained will be processed in line with the current Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

## **Stages of the grievance procedure**

### Informal stage

If you have a grievance relating to your employment you should discuss it informally with your manager. It is your responsibility to make it clear to your manager that you are raising this matter as an informal grievance because you want it to be resolved, as opposed to raising it as a general comment or 'grumble'. You may be accompanied at this discussion. The manager hearing a grievance at an informal level must take action at this stage to investigate the informal grievance and must provide a response to their member of staff about the outcome. The College hopes that the majority of concerns will be resolved in this way.

### First formal stage

If you feel the matter has not been resolved through informal discussion you should put your grievance in writing to your immediate manager. If necessary, your manager should arrange a meeting in order to discuss the grievance at which you will have the right to be accompanied. The manager must give you a response in writing within seven calendar days of the meeting or, if no meeting has taken place, within seven days of receiving written notification of the grievance.

If it is not possible for a manager to respond within this time scale (e.g. the matter requires further investigation or discussion at a committee meeting) you will be given an explanation for the delay and an indication of when a response can be expected.

### Final formal stage (appeal)

If the matter is not resolved to your satisfaction, you should put your grievance in writing to the HR Manager who will arrange for an appropriate senior manager of the College to hear your appeal. You will be contacted within seven days to arrange for a meeting to discuss your grievance, at which you will have the right to be accompanied.

The senior manager hearing your appeal should respond to you in writing within seven days of the meeting. If it is not possible to respond within this timescale you will be given an explanation for the delay and told when a response can be expected. The decision of the senior manager hearing the appeal will be final. If the senior manager has previously been involved with the grievance, the final formal stage will go to one of the Fellows of the Standing Committee of Governing Body instead.

### Third party involvement

We reserve the right to allow third parties to chair any meeting as part of a grievance process. Any third-parties engaged for such purposes will be impartial and have the professional experience and training to undertake the relevant process. Where we are required to share special category data to any third parties as part of that hearing, we will ensure that a relevant condition of processing is met and we do not rely upon your consent for the processing.

*Version control - changes made since document creation*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Details of change</b>
April 2025	Change of advice re collective grievances – to be referred to Senior Manager or HR Manager for advice in first instance (removal of ‘SSLG’ as group is no longer in operation)  Inclusion of provision to record meetings. Inclusion of right to use third-parties to conduct meetings